

Georgia: Meeting between High Representative/Vice-President Jose



On 29 September, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Josep Borrell, met in Brussels with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani.

During their meeting, the HR/VP welcomed the considerable progress made by Georgia in implementing its commitments made under the EU Georgia Association Agreement, with its deep and comprehensive free trade area, which came into force in 2016. The High Representative called on Georgia to continue the reform momentum in the period ahead, particularly in the justice sector, where in the short term the recommendations of the Venice Commission should be taken on board as regards the selection process of Supreme Court judges. Reforms across all sectors have delivered and – with further implementation – will continue to deliver great dividends to the lives and livelihoods of the Georgian people.

The High Representative/Vice-President stressed the EU's continued solidarity with Georgia in its response to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to the €183 million of funds allocated to Georgia's coronavirus response, Georgia is also benefitting from €150 million of emergency Macro-Financial Assistance from the EU.

The High Representative and the Prime Minister addressed the deterioration of the security and human rights situations along the Administrative Boundary line of South Ossetia, exacerbated by unacceptable 'borderisation' activities. The HR/VP recalled the EU's full commitment to peaceful conflict resolution in Georgia and reiterated its firm support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

They also discussed the worrying situation as regards Nagorno Karabakh.

Looking ahead to the upcoming legislative elections in Georgia, High

Representative/Vice-President Borrell underlined the importance of the entire electoral process taking place in line with international standards and being transparent, inclusive and credible. He stressed that these elections offer an opportunity to demonstrate Georgia's attachment to delivering on its commitments and its democratic credentials.

The High Representative welcomed Georgia's continued active participation in and contribution to the Eastern Partnership and looked forward to continuing this collaboration in the period ahead, which includes the March 2021 Summit.

ECB publishes statement of compliance of €STR with IOSCO Principles for Financial Benchmarks



PRESS RELEASE

30 September 2020

- Statement explaining how ECB administers €STR
- Compliance of the ECB with IOSCO Principles, and therefore with international best practice, in its administration of €STR
- Independent assurance by external auditor

The European Central Bank (ECB) today published its statement of compliance with the Principles for Financial Benchmarks developed by the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO). This statement shows how the

ECB complies with these principles, and therefore with international best practice, in its administration of the €STR. The statement has been independently assured by the auditing firm PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The ECB has been the administrator of the euro short-term rate (€STR) since it went live on 2 October 2019. The ECB's governance, quality and accountability processes for the €STR apply the IOSCO Principles – where relevant and appropriate – to ensure that an effective and transparent control framework in line with international best practice is in place in order to protect the integrity and independence of the process used to determine the €STR. The statement of compliance with the IOSCO Principles for Financial Benchmarks provides an overview of how the ECB administers the €STR, presents a self-assessment of its compliance with each IOSCO Principle, and describes the relevant frameworks and procedures.

More information on the €STR can be found on the [ECB website](#).

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Speaking engagements

[Media contacts](#)

[Kuwait: Joint Statement by the President of the European Council](#)



Today we learnt with sadness of the passing of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad al-Sabah, late Emir of the State of Kuwait. We would like to express our deepest condolences to his family, to the people and to the Government of Kuwait. Under His Highness's leadership, widely regarded as the architect of modern Kuwait's foreign policy, Kuwait assumed the role of a respected

international partner and regional mediator. His vision steered a foreign policy that placed Kuwait among the European Union's close partners. The European Union has been a staunch supporter of the indefatigable efforts of His Highness to promote dialogue towards the settlement of disputes in the Gulf region. His Highness's dedication to humanitarian relief worldwide have earned him much deserved recognition as a global humanitarian leader. His loss will be mourned for years to come. The European Union will continue to work towards consolidating a strong and enduring partnership with the State of Kuwait and its people.

[Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their special meeting on 1-2 October 2020](#)



Dear colleagues,

Our special meeting on Thursday and Friday will primarily focus on Europe's place in the world and our capacity to shape our own destiny.

Our meeting will start on Thursday at 15.00 with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli. We will then use our first working session for a debate on EU-China relations, following the EU-China leaders' meeting via video conference on 14 September. We want to work with China on tackling major global challenges such as the COVID 19 pandemic and climate change. We also want to insist on a more balanced and reciprocal economic relationship, ensuring a level playing field. And we will continue to promote our values and standards.

At the end of the session, we will discuss current issues requiring our attention, namely the situation in Belarus, the poisoning of Alexei Navalny and the Nagorno-Karabakh escalation.

The dinner will be entirely devoted to the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and our relations with Turkey. Our objective is to create a space for a constructive dialogue with Turkey to achieve stability and security in the whole region, and to ensure full respect for the sovereignty and sovereign rights of all EU Member States. This will only be possible if Turkey engages constructively. All options remain on the table to defend the legitimate interests of the EU and its Member States.

The EU can only be strong on the international stage if it has a resilient and innovative economic base.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly revealed some of the EU's weaknesses. But I believe we should turn this into an opportunity, critically assessing together how to make the EU more resilient. Crucially, I would like us to discuss how we can best enhance the EU's strategic autonomy alongside an open and competitive social market economy.

Against this backdrop, we will have an in-depth discussion on Friday morning on unlocking the full potential of the Single Market, developing an ambitious industrial policy and exploiting the opportunities offered by the latest digital developments.

The exceptional recovery package, adopted in July, will help transform our economies and, along with the Green and Digital transitions, will support us achieve these ambitions.

At the end of the meeting, we will provide a brief update on negotiations with the United Kingdom.

I look forward to seeing you in Brussels.

Education must not fall victim to COVID-19

I have always believed that education is the basis of equality and freedom and the best social uplifting tool. Therefore, I am deeply convinced the issue of education in times of COVID-19 is central to the future of all of us, in developed, emerging and developing countries alike. This is why it was important for me to participate in this SOS education event, carried out on the occasion of the annual United Nations General Assembly.



During the COVID-19 lockdowns earlier this year, schools were closed for more than 90 per cent of the world's student population, leaving at least a third of children completely cut off from their education. Today, hundreds of million students remain affected by school closures. The consequences for their education, protection and well-being are considerable.

“The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated deep inequalities in access to education and digital

connectivity.”

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated deep inequalities in access to education, quality learning and above all digital connectivity. This is true in developed countries, where the closure of schools and universities has highlighted the persistence of the digital divide, between those who can afford computers and fast Internet access for everyone in the family and those who only have smartphones or no access at all. Between those who live in bigger houses with gardens and those living in small flats.

“The pandemic could call into question one of the most positive trends seen over the past half-century: the great progresses made in access to education.”

But obviously these inequalities are even more important in developing countries. If these difficulties continue, the future of an entire generation is at risk. This would call into question one of the most positive trends we have seen over the past half-century: the great progresses made regarding access to education.



According to World Bank data, in 1970 68% of children in low- and middle-income countries attended primary school, this proportion reached 89% in 2018. It is striking that the gap in school enrolment rates between girls and boys, which was 18 percentage points in 1970 in these countries, is only three points today. Moreover, this gap is nil at secondary level and the reverse is true at tertiary level: there are now more women than men in the universities of low- and middle-income countries.

All economists agree that a rise in the level of education is a necessary precondition for the economic take-off of countries, even if not a sufficient one. However, many challenges remain: teaching conditions are often difficult and teaching quality insufficient. Already before COVID-19, more than half of all 10-year-old children in low- and middle-income countries were unable to read a simple story. And millions of adolescents are not learning the transferable, digital and entrepreneurial skills to prepare them for the future. We see also a worrying rise in unemployment among young graduates in many countries.

“What has been achieved in education over the last

50 years has made a tremendous contribution to reducing gender inequalities worldwide.”

Still, widespread education favours the establishment of democratic societies that respect human rights, preparing people to exercise an enlightened citizenship. It enables societies in particular to move towards the empowerment of women and girls. What has been achieved in the field of education over the last 50 years has already made a tremendous contribution to reducing gender inequalities worldwide, even if much remains to be done and not just in the developing countries.

Progresses in education in danger

However, all of this is in danger if education is not prioritised in plans to reopen economies. When children miss out on education they are at increased risks of exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect. Children from troubled families face the double burden of losing their education and losing out on the safety that school provides. And girls are at a greater risk of forced marriage and early pregnancy.

As ever, the most vulnerable are paying the heaviest price: those living in poverty or conflict, from ethnic minority groups, with disabilities, and internally displaced or refugee children. As schools remain closed, they fall deeper into deprivation and fall further behind their peers.

We know from recent data that an additional 150 million children could be plunged into poverty due to COVID-19. In July, the World Bank estimated a \$10 trillion loss in global earnings due to the time in school that children have already missed, highlighting that economic losses will stretch far beyond own families.

“Governments around the globe must prioritise their children when it comes to decisions on re-opening and funding.”

Governments around the globe must prioritise their children – who are the future earners of any society – when it comes to decisions on re-opening and education funding. Helping to popularise this idea was the aim of the event organised with UNICEF.



European Union at the forefront of supporting education worldwide

The European Union has been and will remain at the forefront of supporting education worldwide. It is also the leading international donor when it comes

to child support. Through the € 36 billion of the [Team Europe initiative](#) the EU and its Member states are supporting our external partners to fight Covid-19 and its socio-economic consequences. A significant part of that effort goes to children and schools. In our upcoming Comprehensive Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Child Guarantee, we intend also to strengthen our support to digital education and the protection of the most vulnerable children.

I will pay a lot of attention to make sure that all EU external policies continue to attach high priority to education and that we help ensure that all children have an equal start in life. Even in times as difficult as those of Covid-19.